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Issue 22 | Sept 2008

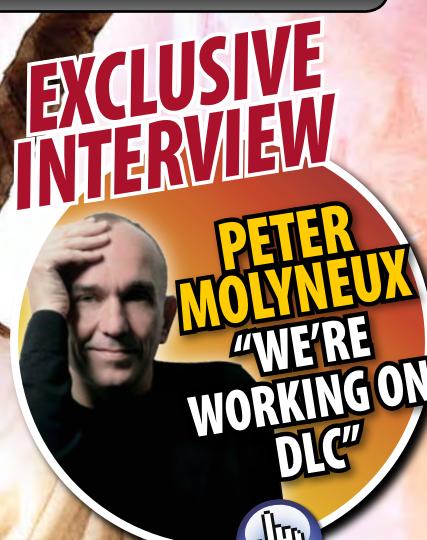
360zine

Free Magazine For Xbox 360 Gamers. *Read it, Print it, Send it to your mates...*

WORLD EXCLUSIVE PREVIEW

FABLE III

Massive hands-on preview and exclusive screenshots inside...



EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW
PETER MOLYNEUX
"WE'RE WORKING ON DLC"



PREVIEW! 
GUITAR HERO 4

PREVIEW! 
HAIL TO THE CHIMP

PREVIEW! 
FALLOUT 3

REVIEW! 
WARHAMMER



|02

Welcome to 360Zine



"Just to warn you, Peter probably won't let you play the game straightaway. He'll want to show you around his baby first." These were the words with which the PR greeted us at Lionhead Studios. When we'd arranged for an exclusive hands-on with the release candidate of Fable II, not seen by anyone else outside of Lionhead before, we'd asked for a developer to be available so we could quiz them on what we found. Little did we realise that Microsoft would arrange for none other than Peter Molyneux himself to spend the entire afternoon with us.

Now we're seasoned games writers, but this is Peter Molyneux, the genius behind Populous, Syndicate and, of course, Fable. And he spent the whole afternoon with us, answering every question we could think of about Fable 2, as he showed off one of his characters, played a bit of co-op with us and then let us loose on the game. Come on, it's pretty cool.

So this issue is the result of a rainy day in Guildford when the sun shone in Albion. Read our exclusive hands-on, watch the exclusive interview, and mark October 24th on your calendar. Fable II is coming, and we can't wait.

Dan Hutchinson, Editor
360zine@gamerzines.com

360Zine FEEDBACK!
Click here to tell us what you think of the new issue

WORLD EXCLUSIVE



MEET THE TEAM

Probably the best games writers... ever!



Chris Schilling
Is Fable-ous



Steve Hill
Is apparently suffering from Fallout



Ian Morris
Is the man to talk to about XBLA

Fable II hands-on exclusive preview

Exclusive Peter Molyneux interview

Fable II Pub games

Free Fable II magazine revealed

QUICK FINDER

Every game's just a click away!

Tomb Raider: Underworld
Midnight Club Los Angeles
Lips
Sonic Unleashed
Alpha Protocol
Aliens: Colonial Marines
Project Origin

Battle Fantasia
Ride to Hell
Fable 2
Guitar Hero 4
Hail to the Chimp
Fallout 3
Warhammer: Battle March
Madden NFL 09
XBLA

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Without the multimedia playing, the magazine will look correct, but you will be missing out on all of the extra content built into each issue, like videos, animated screenshots, annotations, quizzes, competitions and more.

We recommend you close and re-open the magazine and select "Play" when asked about the multimedia to enjoy the magazine as intended.

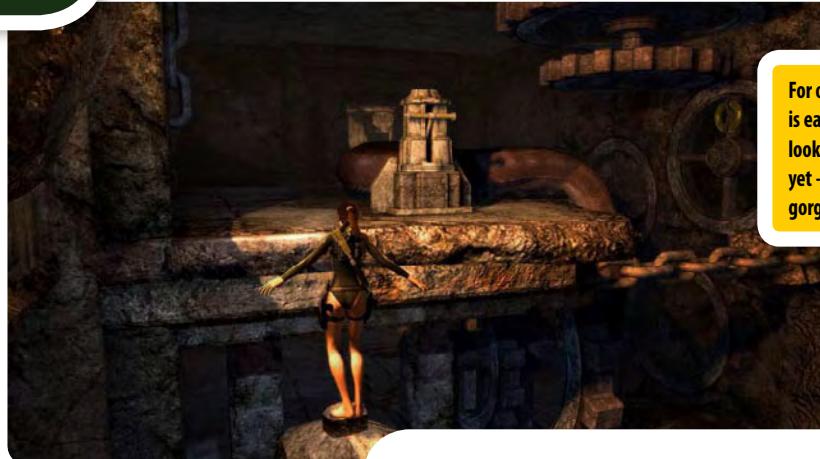




Previews



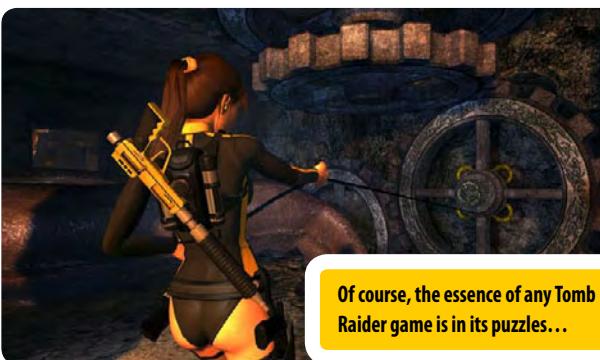
Publisher: Eidos
 Developer: Crystal Dynamics
 Heritage: Tomb Raider: Legend, Tomb Raider: Anniversary
 Link: www.tomraider.com
 ETA: 21st November



For our money, this is easily the nicest-looking Tomb Raider yet – check out that gorgeous lighting.



Combat has been tweaked so it's more effective, and you'll face off against some unusual opponents, like the kraken.



Of course, the essence of any Tomb Raider game is in its puzzles...



"From what we've seen so far, this is the most graphically impressive Tomb Raider to date"

PREVIEW FEEDBACK!
 Click here to tell us what you think of Tomb Raider: Underworld

FIRST LOOK

Tomb Raider: Underworld

Stop! Hammer time...

What's the story?

Lara's going deeper underground in her latest adventure, in an attempt to recover the legendary weapon of Thor, Norse god of thunder. At the bottom of the Mediterranean, Lara discovers proof of this hammer, but her digging may have inadvertently awakened a long-dormant power with the potential to devastate the world. It's business as usual for the rope-swinging heroine...

What do we know?

Expect something a little darker than before – with the trailer showing Lara detonating Croft Manor, all bets are off with this one. It'll probably represent a bit of a series reboot – hopefully more along the lines of Tomb Raider: Legend than Angel Of Darkness. With Crystal Dynamics once again on development duties though, it seems we're in for yet more gymnastic exploration, brain-twisting puzzles and thrilling combat. It's been built specifically for HD consoles from the ground up, and from what we've seen so far, this is the most graphically impressive Tomb Raider to date. Time to start getting excited, we think.

When do we get more?

It's due for release on 21st November. Expect a demo to surface on Xbox Live before then, and we should have a review for you in two issues' time.

Anything else to declare?

As you might expect from the name, you won't just be facing earthly beasts and human foes. Some more supernatural foes will feature this time, testing Lara's abilities to the full.

OUT
05.09.08

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Jump in.

XBOX 360. LIVE

CONTROL ➔





Previews



Publisher: Rockstar Games

Developer: Rockstar

San Diego

Heritage: Red Dead
Revolver, Midnight Club 3:
Dub EditionLink: www.rockstargames.com/midnightclubLA

ETA: 10th October

The attention to detail is extremely impressive – if you're an LA resident, you'll be able to find your way around very easily.



The dynamic day-night cycle and weather make for more varied races than the previous *Midnight Club* games.



For those who believe two wheels are better than four, bikes will be putting in an appearance, too.



"Midnight Club 3: Dub Edition had three cities, but this time it's just one"

FIRST LOOK

Midnight Club Los Angeles

Bright lights, big city, fast cars...

PREVIEW FEEDBACK!
Click here to tell us what you think of *Midnight Club Los Angeles*

What's the story?

Midnight Club often seems to be Rockstar's forgotten franchise, yet it's actually the publisher's second highest selling (after GTA, of course). Last time, *Midnight Club 3: Dub Edition* had three cities, but this time it's just one – LA appearing in all its glory. Rockstar San Diego has represented the city as closely as possible without being slavish to the layout. It's a highlights package of the city – the real roads and sidestreets being tweaked to provide optimum racing fun.

What do we know?

Rockstar has always been all about the immersion, and this has been taken to the next level with *Midnight Club: Los Angeles*. Rather than having to tap through menu screens, you'll merely see everything pop up as part of the main display, allowing you to get back to the driving with a quick button press. And this time round, you won't be struggling to pass individual events, with the new Reputation Points mechanic rewarding you even if you don't finish first. You might not earn as many points, but if you're placing reasonably well often enough, you've got a chance of moving on. You'll even be racing before you race – flash your headlights at another car, and you can compete to be the first to reach the starting point!

When do we get more?

It's out next month, and we should be able to bring you a review in the next issue of 360Zine.

Anything else to declare?

Fed up of night racing? You can now compete during the day. And with a fully dynamic weather system, you'll have to be prepared for all eventualities.

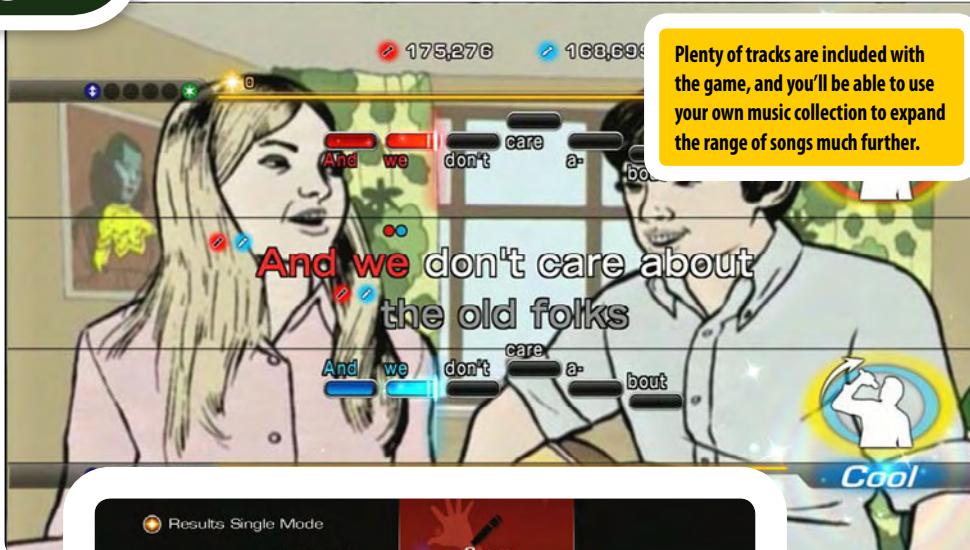


Previews

Lips

Publisher: Microsoft Game Studios
Developer: iNiS

Heritage: Ouendan, Elite Beat Agents, Gitaroo Man
Link: www.xbox.com/en-US/games/l/lips
ETA: November/December



PREVIEW FEEDBACK!
Click here to tell us what you think of Lips

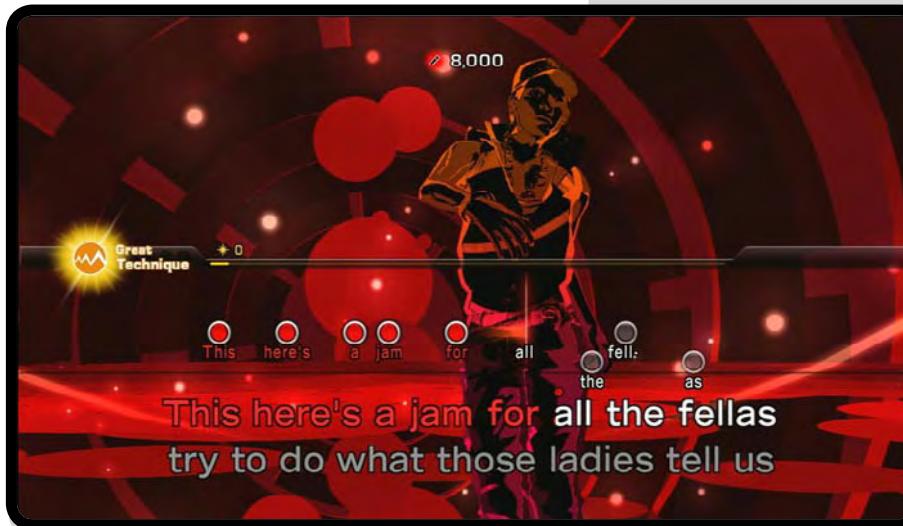
Backstage



Young Folks
Peter Bjorn And John

Multiply : VS
Voice Reduction : OFF
Audio Effects : Default

The menu offers a choice from the song's original video, or one created by the game.



FIRST LOOK

Lips

A serious rival to SingStar's karaoke crown

What's the story?

Microsoft is clearly dead-set on appealing outside the traditional gamer demographic, and one of its big hopes to woo more casual gamers is this karaoke game. You might have thought that SingStar had that particular genre sewn up, but when Lips arrives you may have to think again.

What do we know?

Japanese developers iNiS might seem like an unusual choice to helm the game, but we suspect that their work on rhythm-action classics Gitaroo Man and Ouendan make them ideal candidates for the job. Lips will come bundled with two wireless microphones which are motion sensitive, too – simply shake them to activate them whenever you want to play. You'll also be able to shake them for percussive accompaniment, and clapping motions are recognised, too. It's a very social kind of karaoke experience, positively encouraging players to join in whenever they want. And while its interface looks very familiar, it offers support for your own tunes (plug in an iPod or Zune and you can sing along to your own music collection) which is a nice, and original, touch to the game.

When do we get more?

It's due out on the 11th November in the US, so expect a European release around that time – possibly slightly later to allow for any localisation delays that might crop up.

Anything else to declare?

There's more of a game-like progression system, where you can earn medals depending on how well you perform.

"Lips will come bundled with two wireless microphones which are motion sensitive, too"

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<http://warhammer.deepsilver.com>

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 CONTROL 



INCOMING

A fistful of top new titles coming to 360...



Sonic Unleashed

Publisher: Sega | **ETA:** Christmas

Could Sonic Team's latest attempt to revive the blue hedgehog's flagging appeal provide a decent game? Signs are looking good so far – Sega has a new bespoke 'hedgehog engine' which transfers the action instantly from 2D to 3D, with the gameplay in the two-dimensional sections echoing Sonic's earliest adventures.



Aliens: Colonial Marines

Publisher: Sega | **ETA:** Late 2008

Another new project from Brothers in Arms creator Gearbox, this builds on the developer's expertise in squad shooters by offering plenty of tactical team-based action. Each marine will have his own personality, while the first-person action will be lent further immersion by the removal of any kind of HUD.



Project Origin

Publisher: Warner Bros. | **ETA:** Q4 2008

Accept no substitutes, as this is the official sequel to Monolith's horror FPS F.E.A.R. – the developer returning to provide another slice of shock and gore. It's no surprise to find the frightening (and frighteningly powerful) Alma is involved, and with significantly improved graphics and AI, shooter fans should be in for a creepy ride once more.



Alpha Protocol

Publisher: Sega | **ETA:** Early 2009

Obsidian Entertainment are the folks behind this spy-themed RPG, as you take control of a CIA field agent who, when a mission goes wrong, finds himself on the run from the US government. With the opportunity to choose from a James Bond or Jack Bauer approach to conversation, this could leave spy fans both shaken and stirred.



Battle Fantasia

Publisher: 505 Games | **ETA:** Q1 2009

From Arc System Works, creator of the Guilty Gear games, comes another 2D fighter, this time with pseudo-3D characters to make the action visually a little meatier. The combatants aren't your usual beat-'em-up types, as they're based on fantasy characters – and with an interesting RPG-style health bar replacing the usual energy meter, this is a very different brawler.



Ride to Hell

Publisher: Deep Silver | **ETA:** Q2 2009

Easily one of the most unusual sandbox games we've ever seen, Ride to Hell transports you back to the late 60s, where you're part of a biker gang, riding around and attempting to protect your turf from rival groups. Expect beer drinking and bare-knuckle fighting, soundtracked by some good old-fashioned rock and roll music.

UPCOMING

OCTOBER

- **FIFA 09 – 3rd October**
- **NBA Live 09 – 10th October**

NOVEMBER

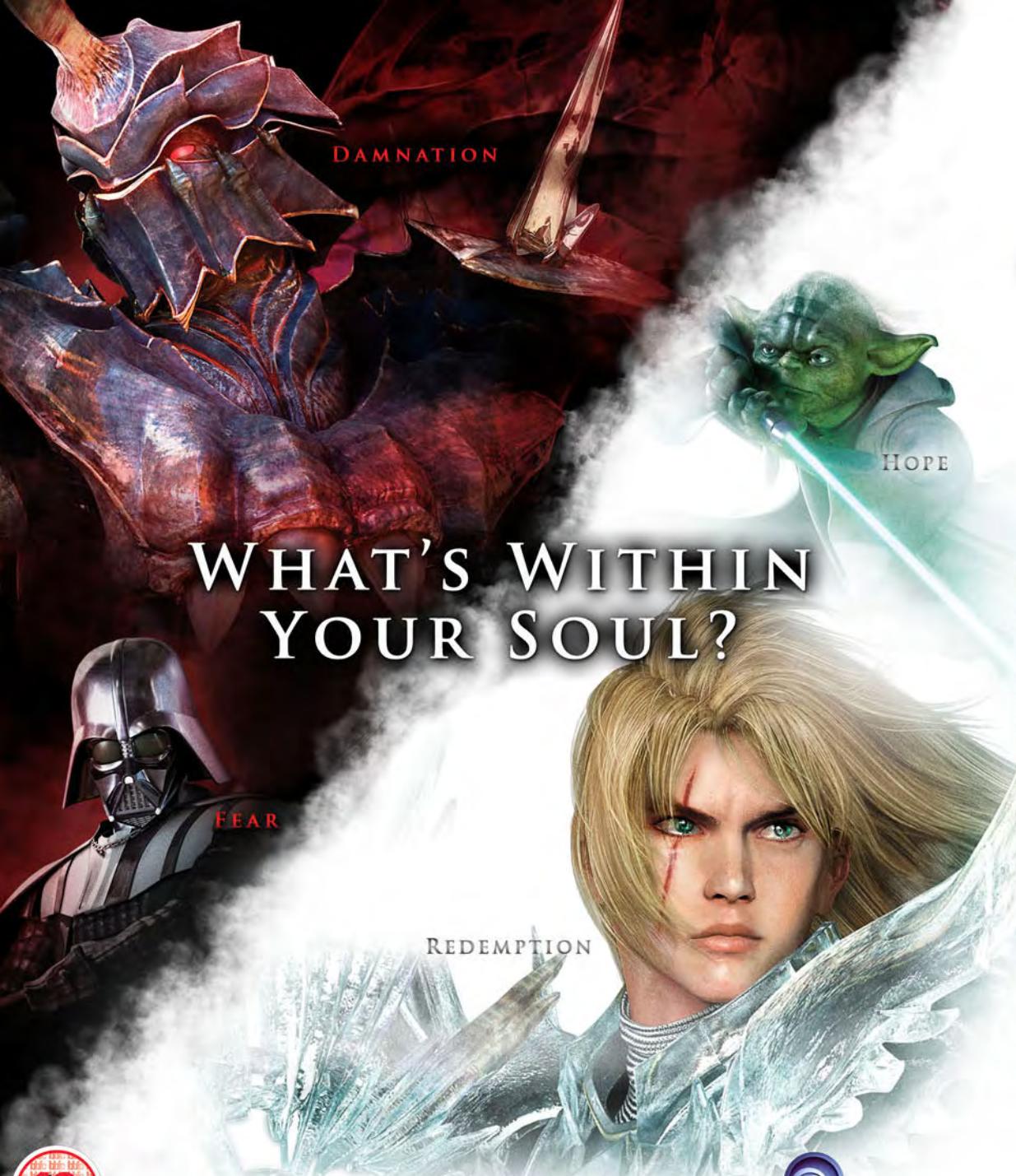
- **Destroy All Humans: Path of the Furon – 7th November**
- **Need for Speed Undercover – 21st November**

CHRISTMAS

- **High School Musical 3 – Christmas**
- **Shaun White Snowboarding – Christmas**

Q1 2009

- **Rock Revolution – Q1 2009**
- **The Precursors – Q1 2009**



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CONTROL ➔





WORLD EXCLUSIVE PREVIEW

FABLE II

Welcome to an afternoon with Peter Molyneux, and the release candidate version of Fable 2 that nobody else has seen....

Peter Molyneux might be one of videogaming's most important developers, but he's not brilliant at his own game. We're playing cooperatively on Fable 2, and he's just died at the hands (or rather swords) of a pair of assailants.

"That's your fault," he casually informs us, "you were supposed to be

protecting me!" Later, he'll pull off a Cossack dance in front of a crowd of bemused observers, and force his character to belly-laugh loudly at a funeral, chuckling quietly to himself as his avatar chortles inappropriately onscreen, causing some NPCs to laugh along and others to be outraged. Some time later, after being





Previews

FABLE II

Publisher: Microsoft
Developer: Lionhead
Heritage: Black and White, The Movies, Fable (and before Lionhead, Populous, Syndicate, Theme Park, Dungeon Keeper)
Link: www.fable2.com
ETA: October 24th

PREVIEW FEEDBACK!
 Click here to tell us what you think of Fable 2

> **Fable 2** continued

repeatedly asked to relinquish the joypad by us, one of his employees at Lionhead Studios and some passers-by in the street, he finally, and reluctantly, places the 360 controller down on the desk and smiles. It's clear that Molyneux is enraptured by his own game, and given how often he's probably had to play it recently, that's quite something.

Fable 2 is obviously a real labour of love for Molyneux and his team. You can see it in his eyes and hear it in his voice as he enthuses about the various aspects that make his game so great. But more importantly, he wants you to love his game. He wants people to play Fable 2, and enjoy an experience unique to them. That's why there are timing-based minigames where you repeatedly whack swords into shape as a blacksmith, that's why you can send chickens flying through the air with a hefty whack from your boot, that's why you can use rude gestures to make fun of passers-by, or – as above – giggle away while someone is mourning the loss of a family member. Though some might complain that Fable 2's story mode can potentially be done and dusted in under 15 hours, we confidently predict that no-one will want to complete it in that time.

Molyneux says someone could speed run the game, of course, but that this would miss the point (see our exclusive interview on page 19 for more on this). There's so much to see and do off the beaten track that you won't be able to resist exploring the

fantastically realised world of Albion, simply because it's such a joy to be a part of it. You'll have loads of fun just wandering around.

So what exactly is Fable 2? Is it a role-playing game? Is it a sim-game? Is it a "The Sims" game?

"Well, it's a role playing game that has by far and away the best story that we've ever been involved with," expands Molyneux. "It's a story which has been crafted by people who know how to tell stories. It's got amazing moments, sometimes it makes you feel great about yourself and there's many unique elements to it, and sometimes the story is about you, what you're doing in the world and it's reactive to you and how weird or sensible you are in the world. Sometimes the story is a real adventure story, it's all about beating the bad guy and getting to the end."

"It's clear that Fable 2 has been a real labour of love for Molyneux and his team"

Molyneux has been known in the past for waxing lyrical about his own games, but here you finally feel as if he's achieved everything he wanted. The original Fable was arguably one of the most enjoyable disappointments ever made – partly down to the features the game's creator talked about during development which had to be left out in the final reckoning. But

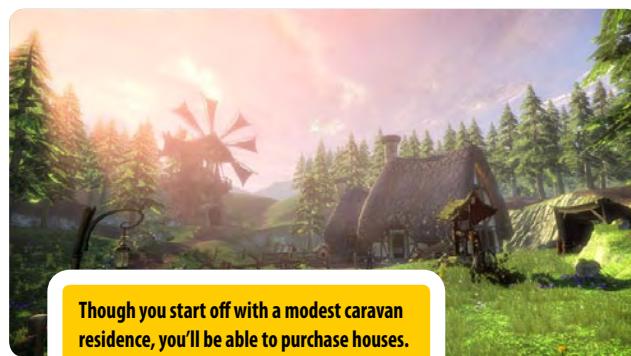
EXCLUSIVE SCREEN ➔



Each location is hugely detailed and evocative – pirate port Bloodstone in particular positively drips with atmosphere.

they're all here now, and there are plenty of other elements, too. Molyneux variously describes it as a non-traditional role-playing game ("because it's not like role-playing games where you play a priest or a mage or a fighter... it's a different take on role-playing because what you play is the way you play..."), a simulation ("you can, for example, affect the economy – you can raise the economy up, you can bring the economy down, you can invest in property, you can buy whole regions for yourself, you can collect income, you can be an evil landlord...") and even a casual game of sorts ("because there's so much to do with things like getting married. It's also about dressing a house and buying furniture, and what your house looks like and what you look like...").

What's important here is that these non-core RPG elements aren't ➔



Though you start off with a modest caravan residence, you'll be able to purchase houses.



The marketplace is particularly lively, with plenty of people to talk to.

ROLL OVER THE BIG PICTURE X



Previews

FABLE II

Albion has plenty of cavernous areas to explore – these have to be loaded in, though the transition doesn't take too long.



"You won't be able to resist exploring the fantastically realised world of Albion"



Your sister accompanies you during the prologue. Fable fans know what's coming next.

> **Fable 2** continued

tacked on, or some sort of mini-games. They are intrinsically valid ways to play the game. Ignore the main story, and set about trying to master the economic simulation. You start out

with your own caravan that you grew up in. You can keep it and it will add somewhat to your reputation, or you can rent it out and begin to bring in some money. Gather enough money – do some trading between merchants, for example by finding one merchant



If you're not careful, the larger enemies can whittle your health down fairly quickly.

who is doing an offer on something, buying their stock and then selling onto another merchant – and you can buy another property, maybe a market stall. Now you can start setting your prices. Are you going to gouge your customers and tenants, and negatively affect the way people see you, or be kind but poor?

Make sure you set the rates that you want before you stop playing though, because – get this – your properties will continue to earn you gold while you are out of the game. So the next time you log in, you'll have a stack of new cash waiting for you. This is likely to tail off (so you can't simply not play for 30 days and come back to be a millionaire), though this mechanic was still being tweaked as we played. Literally in fact, because Molyneux had one of his famous impromptu

developer meetings while we sat there, with the upshot that property prices were going to be hiked in order to accommodate this feature where the economic simulation effectively continues running while you're not playing the game.

The idea is to make you excited to get back into the game so you can see how your empire is doing. If you're not interested in this sort of thing though, don't worry, there are plenty of other ways to earn some cash. Go and take up weapon smithing and play the mini-game where you have to hit the sweetspot as the metronome ticks back and forth, and you'll make a perfect blade. Now try and do it again and build up a chain – again Fable 2 encourages you to beat your previous best. Work not your thing? Well, go and have a gamble and try your luck





EXCLUSIVE SCREEN

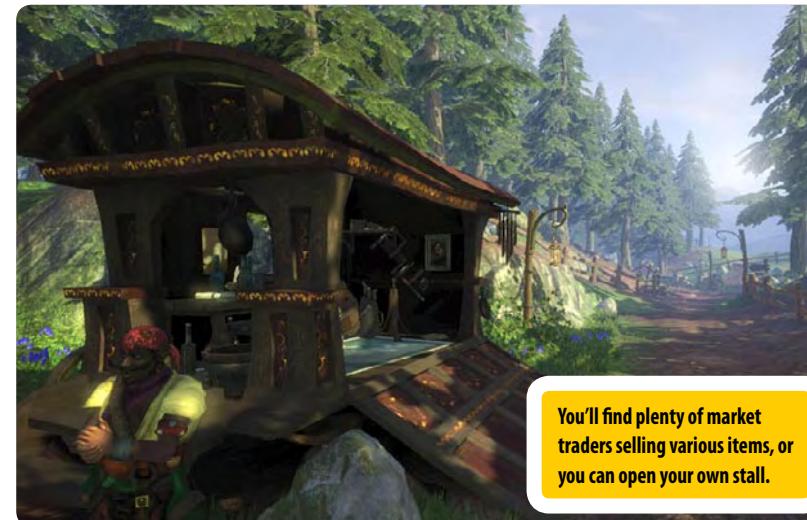
ROLL OVER
THE BIG
PICTURE

As you level up your spells will be more plentiful and more powerful – slowing time to dance rings around your assailants is a particularly useful talent.



Experience is gained through collecting orbs, which are sucked up by holding the right trigger – you're extremely vulnerable when doing this, so make sure you've eliminated all enemies.

"Each choice in the game affects how you're perceived by the non-player characters"



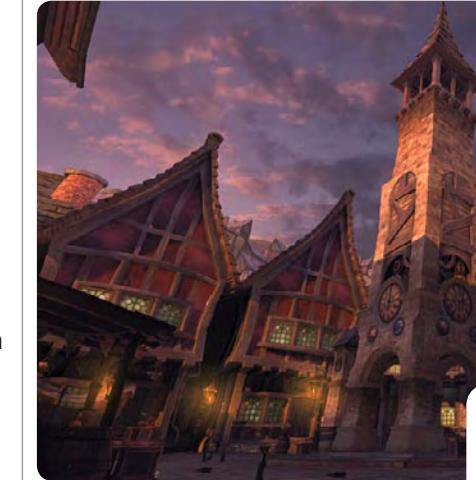
You'll find plenty of market traders selling various items, or you can open your own stall.

> Fable 2 continued

at earning on the tables. See? It's a rich economic model.

Likewise, the casual social gaming aspect isn't an afterthought. When we arrived Molyneux was lamenting that he had just got divorced. It turned out it was fair enough as he hadn't been to see his wife in ages and she'd had enough. So you can court an NPC (with the same sex marriage options enough to warrant an "M" rating in the USA by itself, Molyneux reckons), but you can't just then ignore them. As has been revealed before, you need to give them money; if you have kids, be aware that they will ape your behaviour – good or bad. It's a whole other world to explore beyond the main storyline, a different kind of RPG.

So in every aspect, Fable 2 is a pretty damn huge game, as Molyneux explains: "It's a vast game, of which very



There's a full day-night cycle, while weather conditions vary throughout.

few people will experience every single aspect. It's vast because I want you to play the game how you want to play the game. We don't force all these elements down your throat." And then, with a twinkle of delight in his eyes... "I love that experience when people play games when they think 'I wonder what will happen if I do this?' and 'will this pay off?'" And this time you know he genuinely believes it – and from our experiences with the game, so do we.

None of this tapestry of gameplay is at the expense of the meat and two veg of the RPG though: the main story, combat and levelling.

Firstly, the combat. As in Fable, you have a choice of melee, ranged and magic, and the opportunity to combine the three for the best results. Depending on how you despatch a foe will affect what experience orbs drop. So, you get some general experience (green) and then more specific experience depending on whether you used melee (red), magic (blue) etc.





The fearsome Balverines return in Fable 2 – and they look nastier than ever this time.

You won't be able to resist exploring the fantastically realised world of Albion, simply because it's such a joy to be a part of



Free running comes to Albion.



Bowerstone is the largest city in Albion – parts of which will be fairly recognisable to players, though the game is set 500 years after the original.

> Fable 2 continued

These orbs of XP will be bigger if you managed to pull off some fancy manoeuvres. So if you use more than just stabbing away frantically with a sword, and use some of your special

abilities, you get more XP. As we're playing in co-op mode with Molyneux we also learn that acting co-operatively increases your XP drop as well. When he said we were supposed to be guarding him earlier, he meant it, and not just to save him from getting killed

while he cast a spell, but also because that would increase our XP. Maybe he's not so bad at his own games after all.

With the AI calculating your XP on the fly based on your actions, the combat multipliers from the original Fable have been dropped as they performed the same function, but in a much more crude fashion.

There are lots of weapons in the game to choose from ("about 350, though I'm not sure exactly") and these can be augmented as in the first Fable, but unlike the first game you won't get your hands on the best weapons quickly, so there's a reason to keep playing. For more information on combat controls, see 'Swords and Sorcery' boxout on page 16.

Just be careful not to get killed in the middle of a fight, because while the Resurrection potions from the first

Fable are gone, and you can simply come back to life, you will lose all the XP orbs that you had created.

As with Fable 1, a pull on the controller's right trigger will draw the XP orbs to your character, but here's where juggling comes in, because while you are gathering XP, your character is extra vulnerable. So, if you're running low on health do you risk it and gather the XP you need before you die, or will that speed your demise and lose everything?

When you've got your XP, you'll want to level your abilities. In the original Fable, you had to portal back to the Guild to upgrade. Now you can spend your XP on new abilities wherever and whenever you want. What's more, you can now sell abilities back, so if you choose an upgrade and decide it's not what you wanted, you can effectively >

EXCLUSIVE SCREEN

ROLL OVER
THE BIG PICTURE

> **Fable 2** continued

trade it in. There's an XP hit of course, so you only get a portion back, but like everything in the game, it encourages you to experiment.

All the original abilities from Fable 1 are still here, though Flourish is now a melee ability you need to buy. There are the old favourites like Time Stop as well as some new spells.

The Guild hall is still in existence too, though it's now a hidden ruin, which you get led to by, well, we won't spoil it. It's a nod to Fable 1 fans.

Demon doors are still littered around the world, though some will be harder to access this time. They add a dimension to the game to get you to do non-quest actions.

What is missing from Fable 2 though that was in Fable 1 is the mana bar. Gone. Eradicated. Apparently it just got in the way and was boring, so now you can cast away as much as you like, just like you can swing your sword as much as you like.

We glean all this from playing alongside Molyneux as his henchman, but when our time with the co-op mode is done, Molyneux finally yields the Player 1 controller and it's time for us to start our own adventure. After playing as a powerful female for a short time, we opt for a male protagonist back at the game beginning, and are transported to a snowy, Victorian world, running errands for townsfolk to purchase a mysterious item which triggers a dark event that kicks off the game proper. Even as a youngster in this brief but enjoyable prologue section, you'll experience the game's morality system, with each choice affecting how you're perceived by the non-player characters. There are far more shades of grey this time round, with the straight good/evil choices replaced with subtler conundrums. The game tracks three different axes this time instead of just good/evil – we'll cover this in more depth in our upcoming Fable 2 magazine because it

You just know that
muggers and thieves are
lurking in every doorway.



**"There's no doubting
that Fable 2 is a visually
stunning game"**

needs pages to explain because how your character acts affects not just quest branching, but also how other NPCs will respond to you.

One example of the moral uncertainties the game poses though – you witness a touching vignette between a budding Romeo and Juliet, before their lovelorn cooings are interrupted by the woman's mother telling the gentleman in question to clear off. He gives you a letter to pass to his beloved, and upon knocking at the door you're given the opportunity to hand the offending item to the mother, or to wait until her back is turned and run upstairs to present it to its intended recipient. Is it good to let true love run its course, or good to inform the concerned parent? Even at this early stage, you'll stop for a few seconds to consider your decision, and Molyneux

promises plenty more moments when your moral compass will be confused and when you'll not know which is the "right" choice.

As well as introducing you to the game's controls and a few of its basic mechanics in this prologue, you'll also encounter a character who'll be with you for the entire game. There's a whimpering dog which is at the mercy of a local bully – you're tasked with protecting it from a beating, whereupon it will follow you home and become your companion for the rest of the adventure. While your canine chum accompanies you automatically, you'll still be able to interact with it in a number of interesting ways – you can praise or scold it, or give it food treats if it's doing well. You'll have to teach it to do tricks, such as fetching, by throwing a ball repeatedly so it gets the idea.





FABLE II



There are plenty of action-packed moments in Fable 2.



The hollow men – it's not clear if they have hollow legs.

"Fable 2 is a game which, at turns, feels a little like GTA, World of Warcraft and The Sims"

> Fable 2 continued

The first time you throw the ball, the dog just looks at you expectantly. There are, apparently, training manuals in the game too, but Molyneux went uncharacteristically dumb after dropping that bit of info. Usefully, the dog will assist you in combat too, attacking downed enemies and preventing them from getting up to hit you while you're taking on other foes.

It's even possible to pamper your pooch a little too much – regularly spoil it with affection and it will start to whine when you're not giving it constant attention. Though you'll likely spend most of your time following the breadcrumb trail – which guides you towards your destination without ever simply taking you to the precise spot – your dog will often trot ahead or off to one side and bark when it's found something of interest, in the first case we experienced it took us off somewhere to dig, and we discovered found the ball to play with. While it might seem like Fable 2 is trying to have its cake and eat it by suggesting you follow one route while leading you astray, it's a mechanic that works surprisingly well, and it's up to the player to decide whether to stick to the path, or go searching for secret treasures. There are so many choices.

In removing the mini-map and replacing it with the breadcrumb trail and dog mechanic, it was always going to be a question as to whether such a revolution in RPG gameplay could work. Won't the player get lost? Won't you wonder where to go? But Lionhead

SWORDS AND SORCERY

Mage or warrior? Fight however you want...



Live by the sword

Range of options

A kind of magic

Live by the sword

If you like your combat up close and personal, you'll find plenty of ways to deal death to your opponents. Though you can mash the X button to get through battles, you're rewarded with more experience for mixing up your moves. Timed presses or taps in conjunction with directions on the left analogue stick execute different attacks, while you can hold the button to block. Keep it pressed down while holding the stick towards your enemy and you'll pull off a charged attack, which does much more damage if it connects.

have clearly honed this feature well during development. The breadcrumb trail appears as a sparkly line (it feels a little like following Tinkerbell). It isn't there all the time, it just fizzles into being when you're starting to look lost. You can turn it off altogether, but Molyneux reckons that in play testing most people who turned it off pretty quickly turned it back on again. The genius of both the breadcrumb and dog mechanic is that neither are



There's a tremendous atmosphere about Fable 2's locations, and the immersion is further enhanced by some superb lighting.

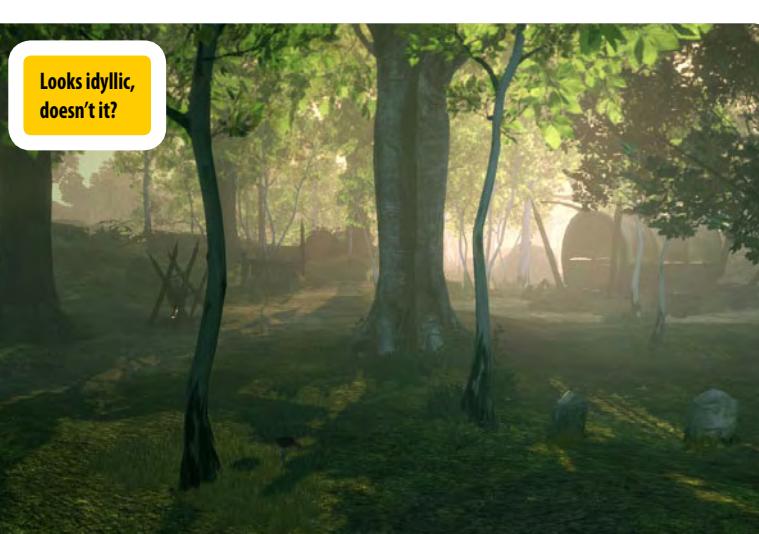
> Fable 2 continued

intrusive, but they are a form of safety net to help you from wandering aimlessly around. And as teleportation is still available in Fable 2, you can always zip to places quickly.

Though Molyneux complains about the lighting in this latest build, there's no doubt that Fable 2 is a visually stunning game. With day shifting to

night and a dynamic weather system, you'll often find yourself simply stopping to admire the view. Your character will grow into a unique looking figure based not just on how you act (yes, the "good" will still have an angelic aspect, and the "evil" a more demonic aspect), but also on how you play. So, your character can get really, really fat – seeing a character like this we asked what you do to end up this way. "You eat too much," said Molyneux, looking at us as if we hadn't a basic grasp of reality.

It's a big world no doubt about it, but Albion's not as large as something like Bethesda's Cyrodiil. It makes up for that by packing a great deal into the smaller spaces – towns and villages are teeming with characters who'll greet you as you pass by, while even the larger areas between hamlets have plenty of



Looks idyllic, doesn't it?

EXCLUSIVE SCREEN

ROLL OVER
THE BIG PICTURE



Though you'll be able to make your avatar every bit as evil as in the original Fable, the character development is much more subtle.

flora and fauna – and more than a few enemies to test your combat skills.

Before we got our hands on Fable 2, we were unsure about whether Molyneux had once again bitten off more than he could chew. In the wrong hands, it could come across as a patchwork quilt of ideas – a jack of all trades, master of none. But that couldn't be further from the truth. The narrative is strong and rich, with plenty of charm and character – helped by a fantastic voice cast including Stephen Fry and Zoe Wanamaker. The gameplay is hugely varied and the controls are superb. It's quite an achievement for a game which, at turns, feels a little like GTA, World of Warcraft and The Sims to somehow remain cohesive,

but Fable 2 manages it. It's an incredibly ambitious game, which just about hits every target it's aiming for.

As we're leaving, as reluctant as Molyneux to stop playing, the man himself jokingly offers to let us take the development kit home just so we can play some more. For a fleeting moment, we excitedly wonder if he's serious, before realising he's only teasing. But that speaks volumes about how much we enjoyed playing Fable 2. Roll on October, when we can finally get our hands on the finished version, and then you'll all be able to see what the fuss is about for yourselves. ●

KEEP GOING!

FABLE II

Click here to continue on to our exclusive interview

360Zine
FABLE II

HOW COMPLETE?

95%

We've got high hopes for this one

FIRST IMPRESSIONS

90%

"POWERED BY ADRENALINE!"



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SBK 08
SUPERBIKE WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP



PC DVD XBOX 360 PlayStation 2 PSP PLAYSTATION 3

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PETER MOLYNEUX

David Taylor interviews **Peter Molyneux**, and if you need us to tell you who he is, well, we despair. He's only the genius behind *Populous*, *Syndicate*, *Black & White* and, of course, *Fable* and *Fable II*...

WATCH IT!
See that video box on the right? It's not just a picture. You can watch the full 15-min interview on the page!



LIONHEAD STUDIOS



Lionhead Studios, Peter's company, was acquired by Microsoft in 2006.

The main quest [in Fable II] is said to be fairly short, 12 hours long. How long do all the side quests take? How long could you spend playing Fable II?

Well, let's get this length of time thing right, because one of the ethoses behind the whole of Fable is 'this game is up to you'. Personally, I haven't managed to complete this game in 12 hours. That's not to say someone isn't going to speed run this game, but if you are going to rush through this game, you're going to be poor, penniless, unpopular, unmarried and unloved. You won't have got involved in any of the side quests, any of the buying of property or anything to do with wealth or fame or any of the repeatable quests.

We've already got downloadable content for Fable II in the pub games, but what other DLC have you got planned?

We are working on downloadable content. I'd like downloadable content to be coming out as soon as we possibly can. There are some features in Fable II that we are probably going to have to pull out in this triage process we're going through right now. If that's the case then the DLC will include that content, and we've also been working on some bigger DLC.

When you were playing through Fable II earlier, you said you yourself tend to play a combination of magic and melee. In RPGs, ranged always seems to

be something difficult to be good at. Is it something that's difficult to implement in gameplay terms?

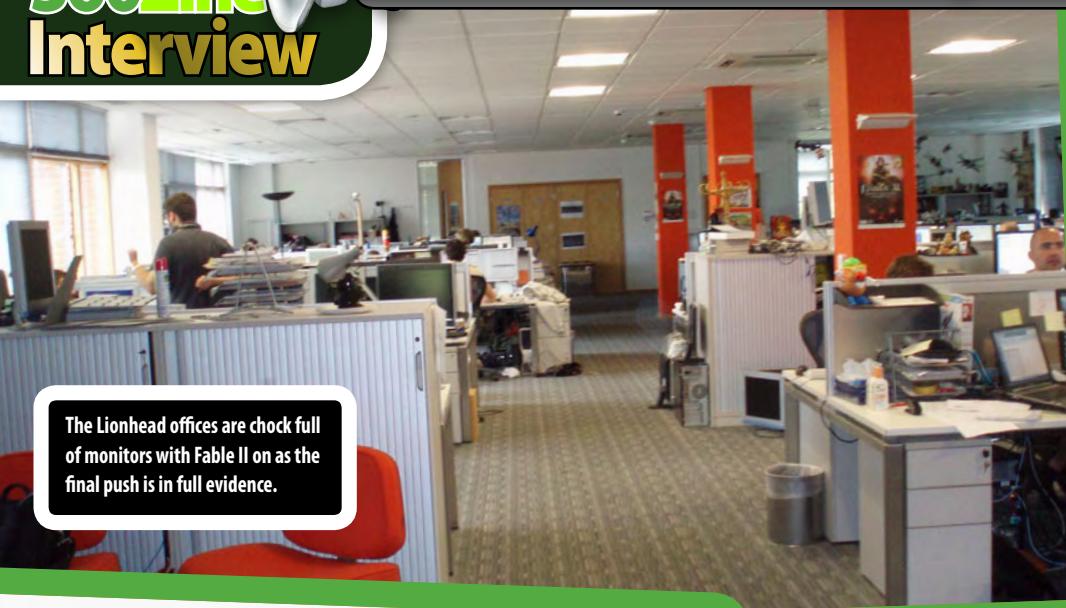
The trouble with ranged is that it's very easy to make it very simplistic. You can use auto-targeting to target every creature, so there's a subtle balance between making it challenging but not too challenging and powerful, but not too powerful. But out of the three combat disciplines, ranged is probably the easiest. The hardest has got to be melee, because with melee there's not only the feel of it, but you've got lots of different weapons and this unlockable combat style which means what the button does changes as you go up the styles. There's lots of things that mix together. Ranged is just simple.

Now magic is complicated as well with all those different combinations.

There's been a dearth of decent single-player RPGs in recent years in preference for MMORPGs. Do you think MMOs will eventually consume the offline RPG?

Sometimes I love playing MMOs. I love the social interaction; I love the surprises that human beings can bring. Sometimes the last thing I want to do is go out with a bunch of people and have the tension and pressure that being relied upon can bring.

For me the ideal game is one that has all the strengths of a single-player game and the strengths of an MMO. So I think you are going to see more and more Live elements in games, all genres of games, but I think that RPGs are the ones that can be most easily adapted to MMOs.



> Interview continued

You've said that you'd like to work on a sports game and an MMO, but given your talent for re-inventing genres, doesn't the RTS need your help on the Xbox 360?

It's a tough problem. It's an interface problem. The RTS was born out of the mouse. It's all about moving things around the screen, but I think that Halo Wars is looking really interesting. I think Ensemble, if any company in the world can, can break that genre and make it happen. I do worry about the RTS genre moving forward. It's definitely one of my favourite genres.

Which of your old games would you like to re-acquire and how would you feel if a new Syndicate was announced without you?

Syndicate would be on the list of games that I would want to do again. I just feel this incredible honour if I see anything that I touched before being touched again by other people and it's fascinating to see their take on it.

Given that Microsoft own Lionhead, and your own heritage, will we see some Games for Windows coming out or are you dedicated to the Xbox 360?

Obviously today is all Fable for me and I don't know what tomorrow brings. Personally though, I'd like to be touching more things, but that really is in no way an announcement!

It just seems that, if you take MMOs

out of it, the PC market is stagnating rather.

Well, I think there's as many games being played on the PC as ever before, but by people we have no contact with, through the likes of casual gaming sites.

With the big franchises, I do think it's a sadness to see the platform not keep up the pace. I think the PC is going to have a rough ride in the future for triple-A titles.

Quite a lot of people are complaining that the UK is losing its competitive edge in games development. What's changed in the community since you started and how would you rate the state of the industry in the UK today?

I think the big difference is the sheer amount of money it takes to make one of the games – it's millions and millions and millions. While it was great to see the old days when you could develop a title with five or six people, now that's simply impossible. It's a minimum of 30 to 40 people, much more likely climbing up to 100.

That means that the cottage industry that we had up to six or seven years ago is gone. You used to be able to start a company up with what you had in your pocket. Now you need to be well-funded and with a team which doesn't only include technicians and programmers and artists, but also business people who can negotiate. All of these things have to be right and in place before you can be a success. ●

FABLE II

Publisher: Microsoft

Developer: Lionhead

Heritage: Black and White, The Movies, Fable (and before Lionhead, Populous, Syndicate, Theme Park, Dungeon Keeper)

Link: www.fable2.com

ETA: October 24th

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FABLE II

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BEHIND THE SCENES ACCESS
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WITH PETER MOLYNEUX
MORE EXCLUSIVE
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KEEP GOING!

FABLE II

Click here to read our Fable 2 pub games review





Publisher: Activision

Developer: Neversoft

Heritage: Tony Hawk series, Guitar Hero III: Legends of Rock

Link: www.guitarhero.com/ghwt/uk

ETA: 31st October

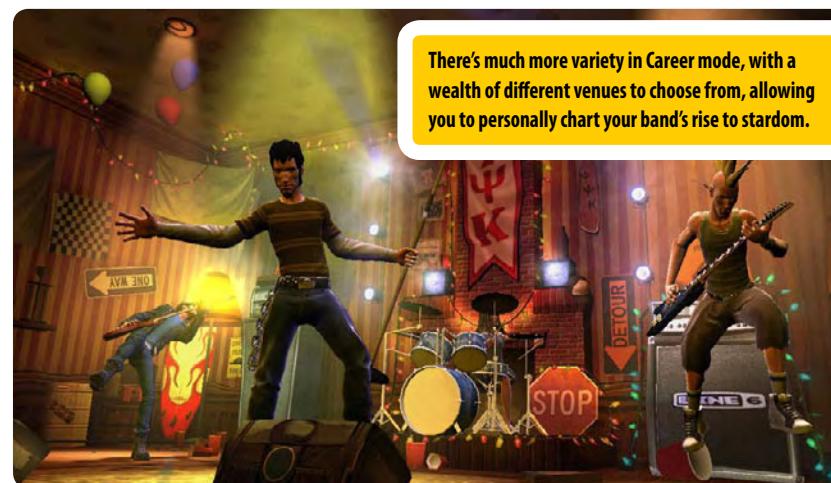
HANDS ON

Guitar Hero: World Tour

Activision unveils its Rock Band beater

Despite being the best-selling videogame franchise of last year, Guitar Hero's been usurped in the hearts and minds of many music fans by Rock Band. Put simply, returning to Guitar Hero after the multi-instrument blowout of Harmonix's rhythm action masterpiece felt like a regression, and Neversoft's comparative lack of experience with the genre was noticeable on some tracks, where note patterns didn't always seem to fit with the music. And Rock Band's incredible success with its online store – its downloadable content making millions of dollars in a very short space of time – has clearly made Activision envious. Now the series has returned with its biggest revamp to date, and it offers a quite astonishing feature set that could well end up blowing the current rock kings clean off the stage.

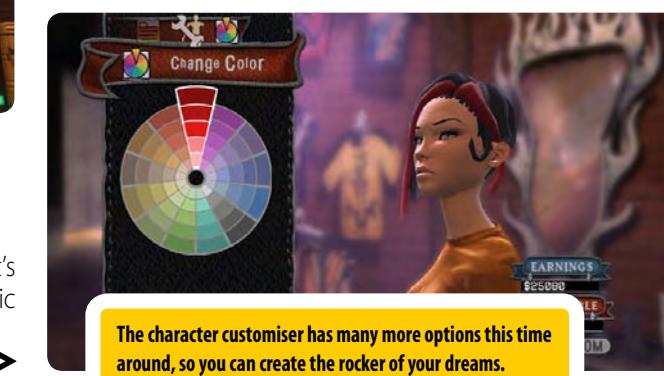
The bundled guitar has had a significant revamp, and it has to be said



There's much more variety in Career mode, with a wealth of different venues to choose from, allowing you to personally chart your band's rise to stardom.



I'd change those eyes if I were you, as they look a bit, well, scary.



The character customiser has many more options this time around, so you can create the rocker of your dreams.

that it looks streets ahead of Harmonix's effort. Expert peripheral craftsmen Red Octane has produced a lovely-looking axe with a gorgeous Sunburst finish, but it's not just its aesthetic appeal that's had a boost. As well as the now-traditional five

coloured buttons at the top of the neck, there's a touch-sensitive pad lower down which allows players to strum without using the strum bar – it's particularly useful for those pyrotechnic guitar solos on some of the trickier tracks. The strum bar itself has



The music's great and the graphics are superb, but the dress sense? Hmm.



Not content with its detailed character customiser, Neversoft has included a number of options to alter the look and sound of your guitar.



There's a quite remarkable array of options in the Music Studio, with a number of ways to refine your band's sound.



"The special music studio allows players to create their own tunes"



World Tour's game screen will look familiar to Rock Band players – our one slight qualm is the reshuffled colour order on the drum section.

> Guitar Hero: World Tour

continued

increased in size, and the clicking sound accompanying each strum has practically been completely silenced.

Yet to truly rival Rock Band, Activision clearly knew more was needed, and so guitars won't be the only instruments you play in World Tour. There's a drum kit which features five pads to Rock Band's four, with three coloured circular pads joined by two

raised cymbals and a kick pedal (which will hopefully be sturdier than Harmonix's effort). The pads themselves are much less noisy than those in Rock Band, with a rubber finish that provides satisfying feedback, while allowing you to hear the in-game notes rather than your own cacophonous clattering. Not only that, but each pad is velocity sensitive, so the harder you whack the drums, the louder they'll sound in game. Nice.

Of course, if you fancy yourself as more of a frontman, then you'll be able to use the included microphone to howl over the game's impressive song selection – at the time of writing, over 40 songs have already been confirmed, with Nirvana's About A Girl rubbing shoulders with Light My Fire from The Doors and cult classics like Dinosaur Jr's Feel The Pain sitting alongside tunes

you wouldn't necessarily expect from a Guitar Hero game – we're thinking Michael Jackson's Beat It here. All tracks will be master recordings, and we're promised more like 80 to 90 for the finished game, a quite amazing range for a single-disc product.

Yet perhaps the biggest revolution comes in the form of a special music studio, which allows players to create their own tunes (or recreate classic ones), edit them, add effects and then upload the finished product online, made available to other Guitar Hero players for no cost via a download service known as GHTunes. To increase the quality of the song selection, players are restricted to uploading five songs, though that total will be increased should your efforts be highly rated by other users. Though vocals aren't included in this section (both for





As usual, there's a wonderful range of guitars to unlock.



The atmosphere in the new arenas should be even better this time around – particularly when you've got a full band playing.

"The game's structure has been tweaked to provide a less linear career progression, too"

> Guitar Hero: World Tour

continued

licensing reasons and to save space), you'll be able to record bass, rhythm and lead guitar tracks, and add drum lines, too. The studio can record real-time performances, or you can slow things down to a more relaxed pace – or even add notes one at a time. Your notes will form the hardest difficulty level – Expert mode – and the game will automatically subtract notes and simplify lines to construct the easier difficulties. It's a phenomenally clever tool, with a truly remarkable level of flexibility, and it also feels like the most significant evolution in the rhythm-action genre since... well, the original Guitar Hero was released.

The game's structure has been tweaked to provide a less linear career progression, too – you'll be able to select from several different venues, rather than forced along a strict path. Elsewhere you'll find all the same game modes as in the previous game, with the welcome addition of a 'Battle of the Bands' mode where up to eight players can compete to see which band reigns supreme.

Rock Band raised the bar for the music game genre, and now it seems



that Activision has set a new watermark which its rivals may struggle to reach. As such, it appears that the number-one selling franchise of last year will continue its success without having to worry too much about anyone stealing its crown any time soon. ●

You can even record a song completely alone – just create the individual parts separately and combine and edit them at the end.

PREVIEW FEEDBACK!
Click here to tell us what you think of *Guitar Hero: World Tour*

360zine



HOW COMPLETE?

85%

FIRST IMPRESSIONS

90%

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HANDS ON

Hail to the Chimp

Primaries for primates and elections for elephants...

Hail to the Chimp might just be the weirdest party game you'll ever play. Coming from the makers of cult Xbox hit Stubbs The Zombie – another bizarre game with a warped sense of humour – it mixes political satire with party games, providing an experience that's totally unlike any other on 360.

Yet while that might seem like a problem – in that its two key elements, the mature (in the true sense of the word) humour and the simplistic nature of the party games, don't seem to fit

together – the truth is that somehow this strange brew works. Just.

The idea behind these political party games is that the king of the jungle has stepped down, with 10 animals vying to fill the vacated position. But instead of campaigning for votes, you're battering enemies to get clams. And political point scoring is simply about being top dog at the end of one of 16 different minigames. You will get to indulge in a little mud-slinging, but here it takes on a more literal form as you hurl pawfuls of glop at your



"The king of the jungle has stepped down, with 10 animals vying to fill the spot"





> Hail to the Chimp cont.

opponents' posters, attempting to cover up their message while keeping your own display as clean and clear as possible. And all the while the game throws in plenty of between-level campaigning, which may go over the heads of younger audiences who might enjoy the fast-paced multiplayer-focused action of the minigames, but will definitely hit the spot with those who like their humour smart and witty.

Though some of the analogies stretch the political theme a little, the minigames themselves are entertaining enough to keep things flowing when the story stuff starts to flag. The cel-shaded arenas you compete in all look

great, with large, well-realised animal characters grabbing as many clams as possible, knocking opponents around, while environmental hazards add a degree of unpredictability to the frenetic action.

While the single-player game might lack a little depth, it's when you have more players involved that Hail to the Chimp really shines. One of the most inventive mechanics has you temporarily teaming-up with a rival, usually to take down the leader if he or she seems to be streaking ahead. The game mixes up the objectives well enough to keep things entertaining – one stage has you navigating your way through a very literal political minefield – and the news-style presentation adds



Teaming up is key to winning some battles, though as you'll share the rewards, it's best to do it with an opponent who's lagging behind.

**PREVIEW
FEEDBACK!**
Click here to tell us what you think of Hail to the Chimp



As you can see, the action gets pretty busy, and on some stages it's all too easy to lose track of your candidate.

to the laughs, too. And it's oddly empowering at times, too – when you perform well and gain a substantial amount of clams, you'll have more political power at your disposal. This unlocks more news segments, so there's a real incentive to grab as many clams as you can, and the number of secrets makes for plenty of replay value.

Not everyone will take to Hail to the Chimp, but it's refreshing to play a minigame compendium with a dose of smarts to back up its fast-paced, simplistic action. The only problem is that it will make you wish real politics

was this entertaining – if only Brown and Cameron hurled soil at each other during Prime Minister's Questions... ●

360Zine
HAIL TO THE CHIMP

HOW COMPLETE?

95%

FIRST IMPRESSIONS

75%

Potty politics – a crazy party game with a brain

FALLOUT 3

HANDS ON

Fallout 3

Apocalypse soon...

Bethesda can be accused of many things, but making short games is not one of them. In an era where six to eight hours of gameplay is considered value for money, it's testament to their dedication to the long haul that well over two years after its release, thousands of people are still stumbling around the verdant fields of Oblivion. And while Fallout 3 looks set to occupy approximately as many arse-numbing hours as its more goblin-oriented counterpart, it's comprised of a very different kind of scenery.

Set in and around a post-apocalyptic Washington DC, you play a 19-year-old



The handheld Pip-Boy acts as your interface.

"Bethesda can be accused of many things, but making short games is not one of them"

who has spent your entire life locked in an underground vault, safe from the wastelands and the feral beings that occupy them. All's well until the day that your old man – voiced by Liam Neeson – decides that he's had enough and promptly buggers off.

Intent on tracking him down and discovering exactly why, you decide to follow suit and take your first tentative steps out of the vault. This momentous occasion occurs around an hour into the game, with the previous time spent establishing the story and choosing your character's appearance. And in a nice touch, if you do manage to catch up with your Dad, there will actually be some facial resemblance.

We join the action as the vault door creaks open and you emerge blinking into the post-apocalyptic wasteland. Bethesda admits that the third-person view in Oblivion was pretty ropy, as they didn't think anyone would use it. There's a strong argument that if >





FALLOUT 3

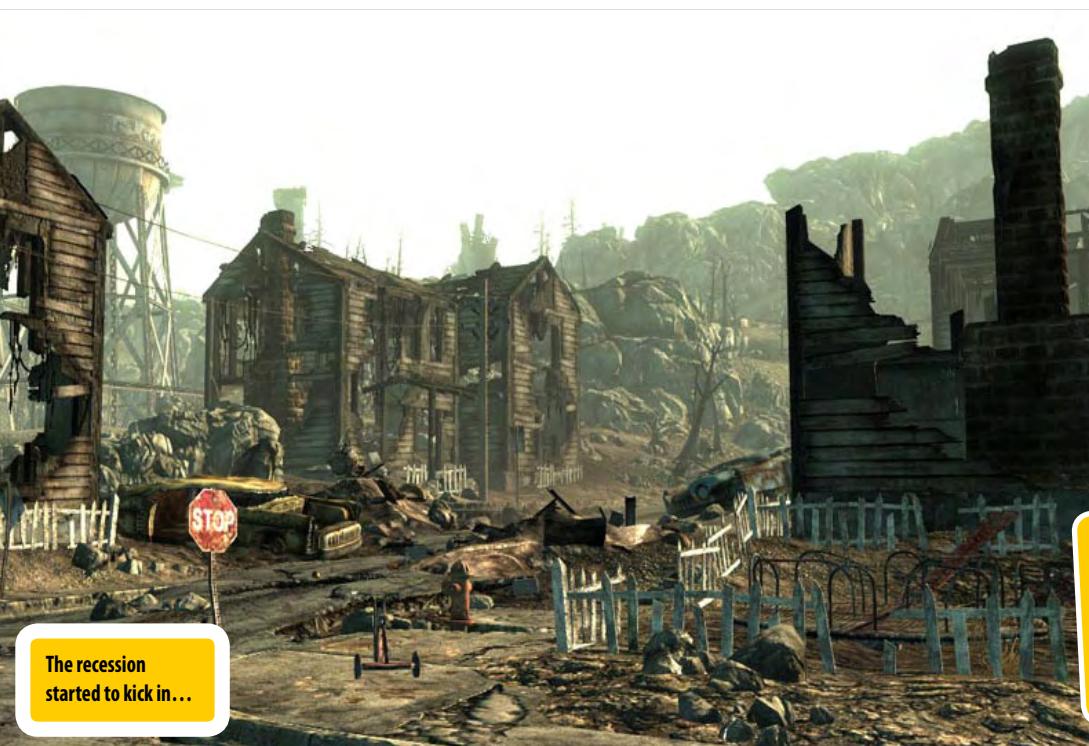
> Fallout 3 continued

you're dressing up your character you want to see him though, and the view has been improved, along with a Resident Evil 4 over-the-shoulder affair – as well as the purist's first-person



view. Chat is similar to Oblivion, with characters appearing in your face and staring you in the eye as they lip-sync through the options.

It's a dangerous place out there, and within a few minutes a rabid dog launched itself at our throat, and we took great pleasure in shooting it in a traditional first-person fashion. We then soon found ourselves in the squalid settlement of Megaton, where residents worship an unexploded bomb – providing a quest if you are able to defuse it – as well as an array of amenities, including a saloon, that appeared to be closed.



The recession
started to kick in...

PREVIEW
FEEDBACK!
Click here to
tell us what
you think of
Fallout 3



The over-the-shoulder
view in full effect.

Leaving them to their bomb deification, we set out towards a disused school full of so-called raiders, who had set out their intentions by hanging the dismembered corpses of their victims from the ceiling. They naturally took against our appearance, although this gave us an opportunity to try out the new VATS system, whereby the game pauses, you select areas that you wish to shoot and the action is carried out in gory slow motion. Multiple enemies can be dispatched, or you can even shoot the

wings off a fly. While it's fair to say that an hour's play was barely scratching the surface, we did find time to stick a grenade under a two-headed cow... ●

360Zine
FALLOUT 3

HOW COMPLETE?

90%

FIRST IMPRESSIONS

80%

Stop worrying and love the bomb

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Issue 6 | September 2008

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The Free Magazine For MMO Gamers

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HANDS-ON PREVIEW WITH EXCLUSIVE VIDEOS 

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MMOZine

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- 8 EXCLUSIVE VIDEOS
- MASSIVE HANDS-ON PREVIEW
- VIRTUAL TOUR OF VALIANCE KEEP INCLUDING VIDEOS
- EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW
- 6 EXCLUSIVE WALLPAPERS
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Publisher: Namco-Bandai Games
Developer: Namco-Bandai Games
Heritage: Ace Combat 6, Beautiful Katamari
Link: www.namcobandai-games.com/games/warhammerbm
ETA: 12th September

Warhammer: Battle March

Conflict of interests...

It's not often you play a game and get stuck in the tutorial, but that's what happened with Warhammer: Battle March, due to an ill-timed bit of note-taking making us miss an essential piece of information which wasn't repeated. After fumbling around with the controller for a bit we restarted that section of the tutorial, and immediately realised what was going to be one of Battle March's biggest issues throughout the game – the controls.



Case in point: the hero characters. Now each army can have one or more special units, taking the form of a single, all-powerful troop, who can roam around the battlefield causing havoc on his lonesome, or teamed up with a unit to lead them into skirmishes. It's a nice idea, and the special attacks are generally well-realised. However, getting them to join a unit is incredibly complex, requiring controller gymnastics that make you feel the

"Battle March is clearly a game that's more suited to keyboard and mouse commands"

game's been designed for all-powerful sentient beings with four thumbs. Think we're exaggerating? How about if we tell you that to execute this simple process, you need to squeeze the right trigger, then hold left on the D-pad, keeping the trigger held while you press B to activate the join command, before moving the cursor to the unit in question and pressing A? We're not joking. It's clearly a game that's far more suited to keyboard and mouse commands, and it's the most

LET BATTLE COMMENCE!

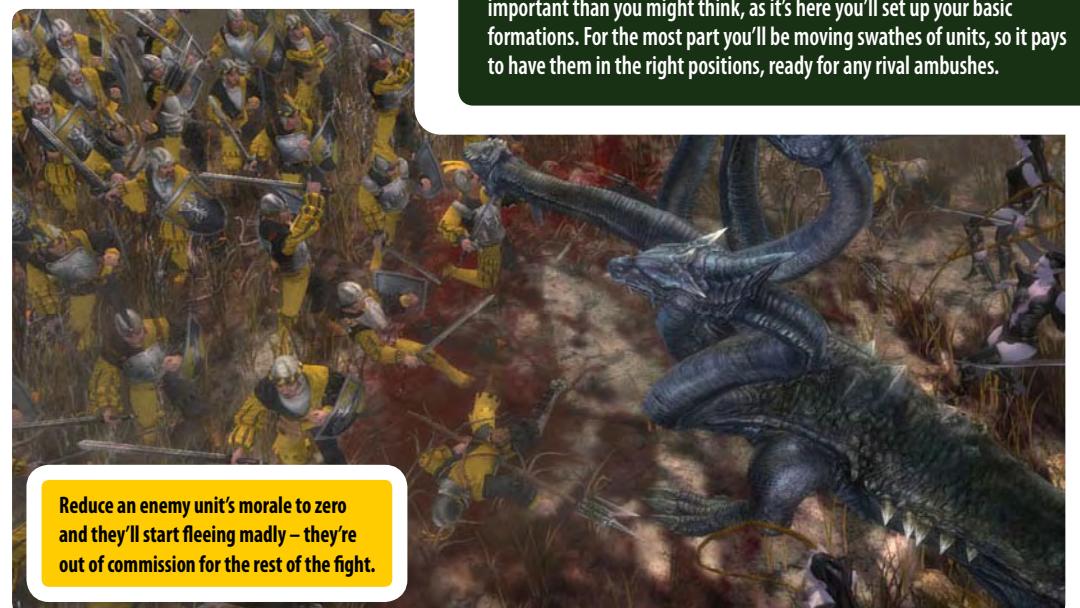
The three stages of war



Deploy **Secure** **Engage**

Deploy

The deployment stage before you start moving your troops is more important than you might think, as it's here you'll set up your basic formations. For the most part you'll be moving swathes of units, so it pays to have them in the right positions, ready for any rival ambushes.



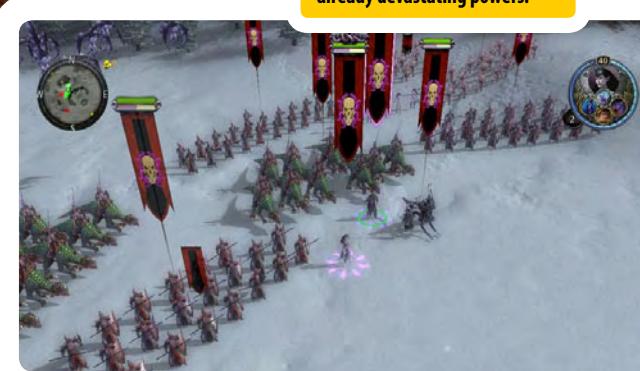
Reduce an enemy unit's morale to zero and they'll start fleeing madly – they're out of commission for the rest of the fight.



Reviews



The sense of scale is impressive, and it's nice to see the graphics getting more detailed as you zoom in.



You'll only get one or two heroes to start with, but you can level them up and increase their already devastating powers.



Roll over screen for annotations

> Warhammer continued

significant hint that this is a PC game first and foremost, rather than a game that's been tweaked for consoles.

It's a shame, as commanding armies never feels quite as intuitive as it should, and if you leap into a skirmish without starting the Campaign mode – even on easy difficulty – you'll likely get destroyed within a few minutes of combat commencing. But fortunately the game's campaign – for whichever side you choose to fight on – offers a much gentler learning curve, which helps you get to grips with the myriad

of confusing icons and the bizarre controls. And slowly, surely, you'll get over that hump, and you'll be micromanaging effectively before you realise how much work you're putting your thumbs through. If it never feels entirely intuitive, it at least gets easier.

And then you'll discover the game's depth – though on the surface it seems shallow, as it's all about battling rather than anything more substantial, with resource management limited to ensuring your troops have enough stamina and morale. But there are so

many ways to approach combat, and the ability to alter formation, stance and the direction your units face makes a huge difference in the heat of battle.

"The first time you effectively flank an enemy is thrilling, and it's great to see your men reacting intelligently"

The first time you effectively flank an enemy is thrilling, and it's great to see your men reacting intelligently to a threat when the reason they've done so is because you've given them very specific instructions. In essence, the fact that you're battling against the controls as well as the enemy makes getting it right even more gratifying.

It gets deeper – you'll be able to level up your heroes, explore expansive skill trees and customise your army's look and setup. And once you get further into the campaign, the game



FREEZE FRAME

Breaking the game down, one stage at a time...



20 MINUTES

That tutorial, and those controls – man, it's going to be a long, hard road to campaign success.



1 HOUR

Still getting to grips with your squad – so why exactly are they all facing the wrong way?



4 HOURS

Problems? What problems? You're now hacking up orcs and rats like there's no tomorrow.



10 HOURS

Taking a break from the story to play online, and getting humbled once again as you get your arse kicked.



25 HOURS

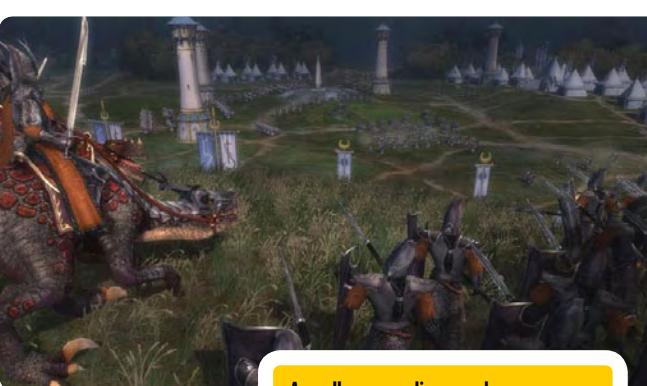
Campaign number one is over, with two others to come... if you get hooked, you're in for the long haul.



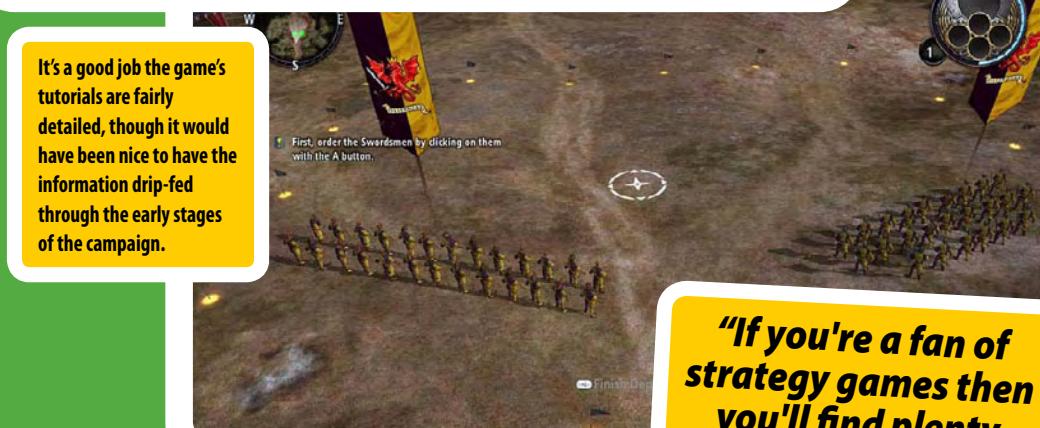
Reviews



The Skaven are ugly brutes, but these verminous units make for vicious fighters – particularly the rat ogres.



As well as upgrading your heroes, you can award units with special capabilities – like the Long Range Shot, which allows units to shoot further than they can see.



It's a good job the game's tutorials are fairly detailed, though it would have been nice to have the information drip-fed through the early stages of the campaign.

"If you're a fan of strategy games then you'll find plenty of content here to keep you busy"



It's a pity the story sequences don't match up to the CGI opening, which is absolutely amazing.

PULSOMETER *Signs of life*

Tricky controls, but the tutorial's thorough

Finally, it clicks!

Amazingly meaty campaign



banners above each unit make things a fair bit clearer, but we're still a little disappointed that the Warhammer universe hasn't really been done justice outside the cutscenes. As for the game's audio, the music is serviceable but forgettable, while the voice acting is idiosyncratic but really quite charming.

A mixed bag then, but if you're a fan of Warhammer and/or strategy games – and if not, why are you reading this review? – you'll find plenty of content here to keep you busy until the fourth-quarter rush of games. Completing all campaigns could easily take you over fifty hours, so its longevity is without question. Let's just hope for a more sensible controller setup next time. ●

Chris Schilling

360Zine
Verdict

Decent, but there are better strategy games on 360

Deep as you like

Will potentially last months

Over-complicated control system

73%



Madden NFL 09

Far from the Madden crowd

Whatever you think about the actual sport of American Football, there's no doubt that it works well in videogame form. Probably better than its real-life counterpart if we're being totally honest, as the stop-start structure must be incredibly frustrating from a spectator's point of view. But it's massively entertaining when you have

"EA's Madden series has ruled the genre since its console debut in 1990"

control of the plays, and you're directing the ludicrously complicated action with all manner of button presses – conducting audibles, informing your players in code where you need them all to be and when. Then, once the snap happens, you've got a few seconds or so to quickly execute your plan (or, if it's going pear-shaped, attempt to adapt to your



The game also has a unique Fantasy Football feature which sees you importing your chosen team from your PC to the 360.

current situation), and then you're stopped again, ready to plan another offensive or defensive charge.

So yes, American football's curious mix of over-in-seconds action and deep, tactical planning, with plenty of freeform spontaneity thrown in for good measure, is a natural fit for a console, and it's fair to say that EA's Madden series has ruled the genre ever since its console debut on the Sega Mega Drive back in 1990. Each iteration has brought its own refinements and improvements, but this latest version feels like the most significant leap forward for current-gen gridiron, with a host of new features that make this the most complete sim of the sport we've probably ever seen.

MATCH OF THE DAY

Because simple action replays are old hat



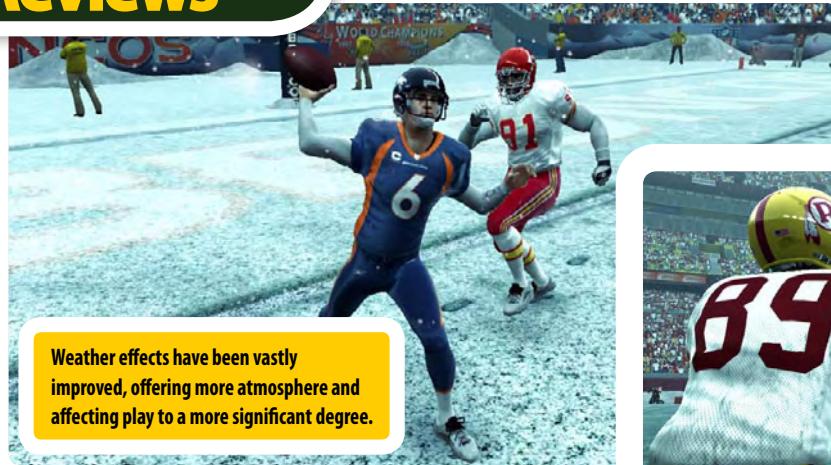
Lights... **Camera...** **Action!**

Lights...

One of the most notable additions is the EA Sports Highlights section. During or after a match (when you have control of the ball, at least) you can enter the Pause menu and view replays of every single play in the game. That's right. Everything that's happened in the match can be watched again.



Reviews



Weather effects have been vastly improved, offering more atmosphere and affecting play to a more significant degree.

You're able to fully simulate any matches you don't want to play – though invariably you'll tend to lose quite a few!



Rivalries between teams affect the atmosphere of a game, with partisan crowds responding effectively to the action unfolding below them.

> Madden NFL 09 continued

The game's enormous Franchise mode remains one of the best career modes in any sports game – it's the kind of mode that sucks you in to playing 'just one more game' and before you know it, it's three in the morning. It's just as richly detailed and fully featured as ever, but the game's Superstar mode (where you take control of a single player, through training camps and exercises from the initial draft to Superbowl stardom, taking in agents, interviews and even IQ tests on the way) is usurped in every

way by FIFA's Be A Pro. The simple fact that you can spend much of the match barely involved at all – if you're a quarterback you have three downs to work with, and if you fail to get the necessary yardage, it can be some time before you get the ball back – kills it as a satisfying experience. It's the lack of variety in your role – you'll either be blocking, throwing or running and catching pretty much the entire time. The off-field activities try to mix things up, but it's not our favourite of the modes available. Much better is

Madden Moments, which tasks you with recreating plays from famous games in gridiron history. Challenges like driving 82 yards in overtime with

the Packers against the Broncos to earn a famous victory are pretty tricky, especially if you're not up to speed with your playbook.

Yet Madden offers plenty of help for those who can't quite get their head around the baffling strategies on offer – the man himself will often pop up to offer hints as to the best plays to choose. Though more often than not, our own choices seemed to work better, as unless you yell an audible or change things about a bit, the excellent opponent AI gets wise to

>

FREEZE FRAME

Breaking the game down, one stage at a time...



15 MINUTES

Feeling slightly embarrassed by your Madden IQ, but getting on with the game anyway.



45 MINUTES

Realising you're not in for an easy ride – the adaptive difficulty is perfectly judged to give you a hell of a game.



3 HOURS

Writing off Superstar mode, but engaging with the awesome – and feature-packed – Franchise game.



6 HOURS

Boost your Madden IQ, and opponents are getting tough. Grabbing a few yards feels like an achievement.



15 HOURS+

More content than you could expect – Madden will keep you playing until next year's game.



"There's something for gridiron fans of any gaming ability in Madden NFL 09"

Previous Maddens have had fairly empty sidelines, but this gets much closer to a real game with plenty of players standing at the side of the pitch as you play.



The game offers four standard difficulties – Rookie, Pro, All-Pro and All-Madden, as well as the standard adaptive difficulty based on your recent performances.

> Madden NFL 09 continued

your moves. You can choose from a full, detailed playbook, flipping through the pages with the triggers, or scale it back to running, passing and special plays – or even get the computer to pick the best play in any given situation for you.

Then there's the Madden Test – a virtual training session set in a Tron-esque neon computer simulation environment – which gauges your own personal skill level, and adjusts the difficulty accordingly. You'll be given an IQ figure, and four stats which will pinpoint your strengths and weaknesses with offensive and defensive play, for both running and passing strategies. Each time you play, these stats will be affected depending on how well you did, and if you're struggling in any area, it will suggest you take on a training drill to help boost your skills.

There's also the useful option to rewind a play should you fail – with the option to choose from 1, 3, 5 or infinite rewinds during a game. This might be considered to be a controversial inclusion, but it can always be turned off, and it will alleviate a lot of frustration for beginners trying to get to grips with the mechanics.

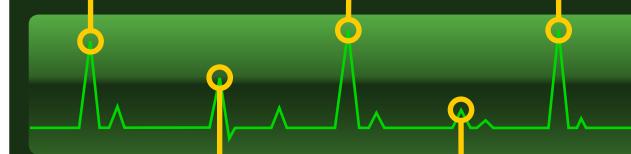
In other words, there's something for gridiron fans of any gaming ability in Madden NFL 09. While the sport isn't to everyone's taste, this is a hugely playable and enjoyable game which recreates this idiosyncratic game beautifully. Throw in some impressive

PULSOMETER Signs of life

Ace Tron-style tutorial

Scrambling a touchdown with your quarterback

Sucked in by Franchise mode



TV-style presentation and some terrific graphics (we love playing in the snow) and you've got an extremely accomplished sports title which is pretty hard to seriously fault. ●

Chris Schilling

360Zine
Verdict *The most complete American Football sim ever*

Splendid presentation

As deep or simple as you like

Superstar mode isn't great

88%



|37

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Xbox Live Arcade Round-Up

Another fantastic four available for download today...



Bionic Commando: Rearmed

Developer: GRIN

Publisher: Capcom Price: 800 MP (~£6.80)

From the second you start Bionic Commando Rearmed, you know it's been a labour of love. The 8-bit music really fits the mood here, as Bionic Commando Rearmed is essentially a retro blast from the past – complete with the gameplay that accompanies it. While the lack of a

"You'll be swinging like a chimp in no time"

jump button in a 2D platformer takes some getting used to, once you've got used to the arm controls, you'll be swinging like a chimp in no time. Great.

- Good sense of humour
- Great music
- Perhaps a bit too retro

Thumbs up to GRIN

89%

Fable 2 Pub Games

Developer: Xbox Live Productions

Publisher: Microsoft Price: 800 MP (~£6.80)

The idea with Pub Games is that you can gamble to earn money or win items for your Fable 2 avatar, to give you a head-start. Though you could use the widely-reported 'cheat' which wins you big bucks for small bets, we're not risking it in case it's a ploy to set you on the path to the dark side. Spinnerbox is random, but card game Fortune's Tower and craps-esque dice-roller Keystone offer tempting risk-betting. Worth a look, and it might just improve your Fable 2 experience.



Good carried into Fable 2

Great presentation

Almost totally random

Infuriatingly addictive

75%



Braid

Developer: Number None Inc.

Publisher: Microsoft Price: 1200 MP (~£10.20)

Contrary to what you may have already heard, Braid is not the gaming equivalent of the second coming of Christ, but is in fact exactly what it looks like – a reasonable enough independent game, with an interesting twist and some gorgeous visuals that have the Internet foaming at the mouth. The ability to rewind time isn't that groundbreaking to be honest – Blinx did it on the Xbox for example, but it's integrated well here, and the platform action's as enjoyable as they come. But worth £10.20? We think not.

Good platforming

Gorgeous

Overpriced

Overhyped

70%



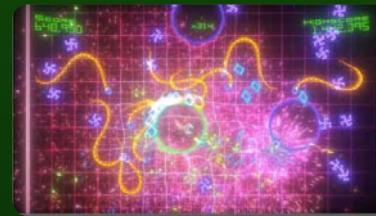
Geometry Wars 2

Developer: Bizarre Creations

Publisher: Activision

Price: 800 MP (~£6.80)

Geometry Wars 2 takes everything the first game did so well and then multiplies it by a number so big we couldn't fit it on this page – it just does everything bigger, better, and far more spectacularly. The achievements are more 'gettable', each of the six modes is equally as awesome as the next (a real feat for any game, yet alone a dual analogue shooter) and the four-player co-op mode rocks our socks into next week.



Awesome

Awesome

Awesome

Yes, it really is awesome

93%



Next Month

In 360Zine Issue 23



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THE DEFINITIVE REVIEW!

PLUS!

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 Publishing Director: Dave Taylor
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 Editorial Director: Dan Hutchinson
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